April 2020 *Monthly Newsletter* Vol 1 Issue 10

COMPUTER SCIENCE in ARKANSAS

FIVE TEACHERS NAMED 2020 ARKANSAS COMPUTER SCIENCE EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR FINALISTS

LITTLE ROCK — The Arkansas Department of Education is pleased to announce the five educators selected as finalists for the 2020 Arkansas Computer Science Educator of the Year Award.

“In this second year of the program, our team reviewed many quality applications; however, when the #CSforAR team carefully considered every application, the team unanimously agreed that these five educators have demonstrated both a long-term and ongoing commitment to, a passion for, and an impact on CS education in Arkansas and the nation.” said Anthony Owen, state director for Computer Science Education. “These educators have earned and deserve this recognition."

The 2020 Computer Science Educator of the Year Finalists are as follows. *Pictured in order as listed.

* Sean Gray, Marion School District
* Brenda Qualls, Bryant Public Schools
* Kimberly Raup, Conway Public Schools
* John Mark Russell, Bentonville School District
* Lauren Taylor, Dardanelle Public Schools

Each finalist will receive a $2,500 award from the Arkansas Department of Education’s Office of Computer Science.

Next, a panel composed of representatives from the ADE Computer Science Initiative Unit and external computer science and education leaders will review the finalists' applications and select the 2020 Computer Science Educator of the Year based on a rubric scoring system.

The winner will be announced at a later date and will receive an additional $12,500 award.

For more information, please see https://bit.ly/2KMApsb

USING LEARNING BLADE TO TEACH COMPUTER SCIENCE

Learning Blade recently presented a webinar in the CSforAR Coffee Café for Arkansas educators and others interested in learning more about this program and its offerings. Learning Blade is a fully funded system of interactive online lessons and printable at-home activities for 6th to 9th graders.

Learning Blade has seen an increase of student interest of 61% in the STEM fields, and schools can earn a 3D printer if they complete over 5,000 lessons in the Learning Blade platform.

Since its introduction in this state, Arkansas students have completed over 1 million lessons in this platform. Learning Blade offers more than 400 online lessons in 12 human-centered missions to explore. Two of these missions, Hack Attack and Flu Outbreak, are some of the academic lessons focused on computer science careers and technologies.

To register for a free license, visit www.learningblade.com/ar

#ARKIDSCANCODE COMPUTER SCIENCE APPROVAL CODES AND TECHNICAL PERMITS EXTENDED

Since 2017, the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) Office of Computer Science has approved a technical permit or an approval code for educators teaching a high school computer science course who do not currently hold a 528 Computer Science endorsement. Previously, it was communicated to educators that these permits and codes would not be valid after the 2020-21 school year.

The Office of Computer Science recently announced, that in the interest of continuing to grow the Governor's Computer Science Initiative, approval has been extended through the 2025/2026 school year for recipients of the 5014 technical permit or 5016 approval code to continue teaching computer science courses.

AP Computer Science approval codes (5017, 5018, & 5019) are also extending beyond the 2020/21 school year; however, existing AP/IB rules regarding periodic AP and IB recertification will remain in place.

More information, including how to apply, for the 5014 technical permit or the 5016 approval code can be accessed at the following:

* 5014 - https://bit.ly/CSforARTechPermit
* 5016 - http://bit.ly/CSforARApprovalCode

Our office continues to encourage all high-school computer science teachers to pursue a 528 computer science endorsement. The 528 will continue to be required for access to the high-school bonus program, which now provides educators an opportunity to earn up to $10,000 in bonuses over five years. Our office has myriad resources to assist educators in earning their full computer science endorsement, including waiving/payingAPPEL program fees.

Please contact CSforAR@arkansas.gov for more information on these programs.

More information on the bonus programs is available at: http://bit.ly/CSforARStipends.

APRIL VIRTUAL PRAXIS TRAININGS PROVIDED BY ASMSA

In March, #codingARfuture presented three Praxis Prep training sessions. Two of the training sessions were for teachers new to computer science, and the third was for teachers currently enrolled in the Arkansas School for Mathematics, Sciences, & the Arts (ASMSA) Computer Science Plus Program.

In response to COVID-19 regulation, two of the three training sessions were presented in a digital format. The online participants embraced the change and expressed that the digital format, while not ideal, worked better than expected.

ASMSA and #codingARfuture would like to thank the teachers for their dedication and hard work during these times and add that they are proud of Arkansas Computer Science teachers for exhibiting so many of the CS Practices during these challenging times - perseverance, collaboration, problem solving, communication, and making use of appropriate tools.

For more information on the Plus Program, please visit https://bit.ly/FebCSforAR or https://bit.ly/3c61EKc.

ASMSA

#codingARfuture

ASMSA IS CODING ARKANSAS' FUTURE

CS SPECIALIST SPOTLIGHT

Before Zack Spink joined the #CSforAR team in July of 2017, he taught science and computer science for Maynard High School for eight years. Spink can trace his CS roots a lot further back in time, however.

"I remember back in Kindergarten, while visiting family in Northern Illinois, I experienced Mario on the Nintendo Entertainment System. I played Mario for hours and realized that I really enjoyed video games, and I have been a gamer ever since.

"Originally, I had planned to go down the engineering route. One day, a retired engineer had been talking with me and he said that I enjoyed science way too much to be an engineer in our area. He described his job as sitting in a factory and waiting for something to break. It didn't involve much continued education. I decided I would rather constantly learn and felt that education would be a wonderful option to continue to pursue this goal. I continued down this route to attain my BSE in Middle School Math and Science and an MSE in Biology.

"While teaching, I decided to explore technologies such as Adobe After Effects and Autodesk Maya for video compositing and animation. I started getting my first experiences with programming through these. I loved writing code, got certified in computer science, and began programming for both education and as a personal hobby.

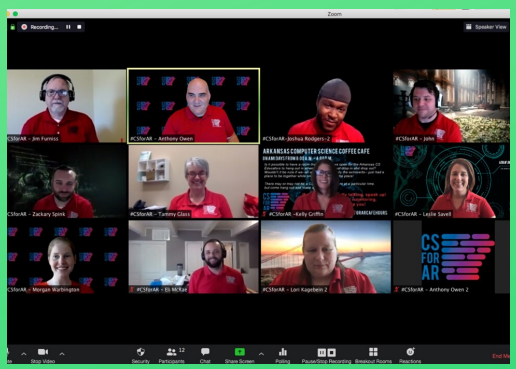
"One of my specialties is learning new technologies fast. I am comfortable with technology and do not view learning a new one as a barrier. Currently, I would say programming, game development, and sharing knowledge of computer science are some of my more specific specialties. Learning new information related to science and tech is my major hobby. I really enjoy learning how to build video games through Unity software. It is exciting to be able to build something in a technological language that works. It feels great to sit back,look at my creation, and say 'I built that!'

"My one recommendation to anyone interested in a Computer Science field would be perseverance. Start working on a problem and sticking with it until it is done. Lots of times my code didn't work like it was supposed to, but I would work through it, figure out the issues, and finally complete the project."

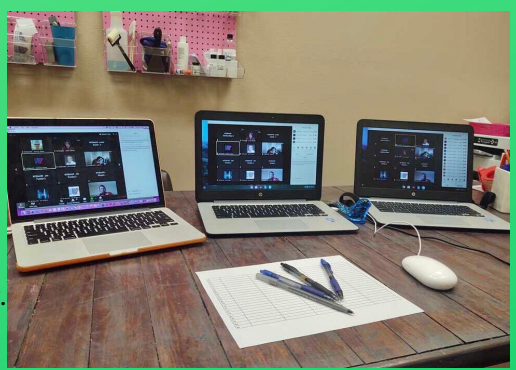
If you'd like to know more about any of Zack's activities, or just want to know more about Python or gaming, reach out to zack.spink@arkansas.gov.

COMPUTER SCIENCE GOES VIRTUAL

Virtual seems to be a new normal and everyone is trying to adjust. For Educators, students, and even legislators, Zoom has become a common tool for people to continue to educate, learn, and hold meetings.



This month the Governor's All-State Coding Competition and the Arkansas Computer Science and Cybersecurity Task Force met virtually via Zoom. Just a few days later, the entire staff of the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) held a First Friday virtual meeting.



PROJECT LEAD THE WAY

Project Lead the Way is a creative hands on curriculum that encourages students by helping them understand their world and their place in it.

Project Lead the Way has created a web page to help teachers and students with distance learning!

To learn more please visit https://bit.ly/3ffpoxL

HACK ACROSS ARKANSAS - H4CK!N9 P@55W0RD5

Hey! What's the password for your email account? Is it the same one you use for your online banking? Is it the same as your social media passwords? If it is, you've got a problem.

Using the same password for many services and having predictable passwords are the most reliable ways to compromise a user account.

Do you recognize any of these passwords? (ex. Password1!, Spring2020!) What do they have in common? Predictability. Let's develop a strategy around passphrases. What's the difference between a password and a passphrase? A password is a sequence of characters that act as an authentication token, a way of verifying someone's identity, like a passport or driver's license. An example of this would be *P@55word*. A passphrase is a sequence of words that also acts as an authentication token but are generally longer than a password (Ex. aRealGoodP@55word4somesite) and might have some variance for each site.

The best policy is to have a unique password or passphrase per site you use. Be mindful that your password hint will only help you identify the password; if your password was a quotation, don't set your password hint to be the author or preceding line.

What is the best strategy, you ask? Use a password manager. They are found in most web browsers and suggest passwords like Rp5gT)yU38KQ12*x . Often, password managers are protected by a master password so make sure the password or passphrase used is strong enough to protect all of your accounts.

For further reading on this topic, please see https://bit.ly/2VQ4gpQ.

PROTECTING YOUR ZOOM MEETING

While everyone learns how to navigate this new normal, Zoom has become one, if not the most, prevalent format of virtual meetings. Many teachers and students are using this platform to continue school work and many businesses have begun to rely upon it for meetings and conferences. However, in recent news more and more people have begun to target Zoom meetings and perform "Zoom Bombs" where they cause distractions through the display of inappropriate material or similar forms of harassment.

How safe and secure are your meetings in Zoom? Are you taking the proper steps to safeguard and shield them from social attacks? The #CSforAR team encourages you to visit the Teacher's Guide to Zoom website found at https://bit.ly/35j4j0J. This resource will give you the tools to ensure you are doing all that you can in order to protect your Zoom account and the meetings you may host and/or attend. Also you can join us in our Zoom room at bit.ly/ARCSCoffee should you need further help or have more questions.

UPCOMING EVENTS

bit.ly/CSPD4All

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SOCIAL MEDIA

#ARKidsCanCode
#CSforAR